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TAGS: PGOV PINR PINS PE

SUBJECT: ELECTION UPDATE: ALAN GARCIA AND HIS APRA PARTY
PICKING UP STEAM

REF: A. LIMA 644

B. LIMA 633

C. LIMA 494

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

11. (U) The latest national poll by the Apoyo consultancy, taken 2/22-24, showed center-right Unidad Nacional candidate Lourdes Flores holding on to first place, although her support fell two points to 33 percent; ultra-nationalist Union por el Peru candidate Ollanta Humala remaining in second after advancing one point to 26 percent, while APRA party candidate (and former President) Alan Garcia shot up five points to 22 percent. The poll indicated that APRA's congressional slate was also surging forward, with its support jumping five points to place it in first with 26 percent, while Unidad Nacional's list fell five points to second place with 22 percent. With 41 days to go to election day, the Peruvian presidential contest is heading into the far turn as a three-candidate race, with the Flores remaining in the lead, second-place challenger Humala holding his own, and Garcia starting to make a strong stretch run. With 58 percent of those polled still somewhat uncertain who they will vote for -- 46 percent of whom say they expect to make up their minds on election day -- it remains anyone's guess which two candidates will qualify for the May run-off. END SUMMARY.

THE LATEST POLL RESULTS

12. (U) The Apoyo poll interviewed 2000 people in 79 provinces around the country, representing 81 percent of the Peruvian population. When asked which candidate they would vote for if the election were held that day, the response was:

Lourdes Flores weeks earlier)	33 percent (down two percent from two
Ollanta Humala	26 percent (up one percent)
Alan Garcia	22 percent (up five percent)
Valentin Paniagua	7 percent (down one percent)
Martha Chavez	4 percent (down two percent)
Others	8 percent (down one percent)

The results are based on the "valid vote" count, which excludes votes cast in blank or respondents who did not name a candidate. In the Apoyo poll, only 63 percent of respondents provided "valid votes," which are the ballots that the election authorities will use to determine the final results. Even these "valid votes" are not firm, as 58 percent of those polled said they were still uncertain who they will actually vote for, and 46 percent of these respondents said that they only expect to make up their minds on election day.

¶3. (U) With none of the candidates in line to win a majority of the vote, the election will likely be decided by a second round run-off between the two candidates receiving the most votes in the first round. According to the poll results, in a run-off Flores would defeat Humala by 60-40 percent, and would defeat Garcia by 62-38 percent, while Humala and Garcia would tie 50-50 percent.

¶4. (U) In the congressional race, the Apoyo poll reported a strong surge by the APRA list, which improved its support by five percent over the past two weeks, vaulting it into first place over Unidad Nacional, which fell five points. Humala's Union por el Peru (UPP) party remained in third with an unchanged 15 percent support. Valentín Paniagua's Centrist Front and Fujimorista Martha Chavez' Alliance for the Future party each fell one point, while President Toledo's Peru Possible party for the first time surpassed the minimum threshold required for representation in Congress of four percent of the national vote. The following table lists each party's support, while our calculations of the approximate proportional number of legislative slots that each party would take are in parenthesis:

APRA	26 percent (38 seats)
Unidad Nacional	22 percent (32 seats)
Union por el Peru	15 percent (22 seats)
Centrist Front	9 percent (13 seats)
Alliance for the Future	6 percent (9 seats)
Peru Possible	4 percent (6 seats)

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) If this were a horse race, those betting on APRA and its candidate Alan Garcia would be jumping and shouting the loudest. Going into the final turn their champion seems to be picking up a head of steam as APRA's strong party organization coupled with Garcia's populist proposals (he's promising everything from roads, to water services to garbage pick-ups) and charismatic oratory kick into high gear. Nonetheless, Flores is maintaining her lead, while Humala remains rock steady with one-quarter of the vote, which does not seem to be affected by the charges of human rights violations against him. Paniagua and Chavez seem destined to flounder behind in single digits. According to the Apoyo poll, the three leading candidates are separated by 11 points. The poll does not cover the one-fifth of the population that lives in isolated rural areas, however, which is more likely to support APRA's Garcia or the anti-political class Humala, rather than the center-right Flores. Consequently, the actual difference between the three candidates probably is much closer than the Apoyo survey or any other poll indicates, and we can expect that the race to qualify for the second round run-off will come right down to the wire. END COMMENT.

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